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SUBJECT: POLITICAL ROUND-UP: ELECTION EDITION II

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe Vallee as per E.O. 12958 1.4(b) and 1.4(d)

SDKU INSIDERS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A SMER-SDKU COALITION

11. (C) The Foreign Minister's Chief of Staff, Peter Kmec (strictly protect), told DCM that FM Eduard Kukan has already been approached by Smer Chairman Robert Fico about serving as FM in a Smer-led government that includes the SDKU. Under this scenario, current PM Dzurinda might serve as Speaker of Parliament. In the event Fico forms a government without Dzurinda's SDKU, Kmec says that Fico has essentially offered the job of FM to Jan Kubis, a long time MFA employee who has previously served as Slovakia's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, lead negotiator on the Stability Pact, OSCE Secretary General, and the UNSYG's Special Representative for Tajikistan.

12. (C) Kmec says the toughest scenario for Fico will be if Smer gets less than 25% of valid votes and SDKU does relatively well. The key then would be Free Forum (SF). If SF can get over the 5% threshold, Dzurinda will be emboldened to try to form a coalition with SF, the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and the Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK). Only if absolutely necessary would Dzurinda add the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) as a fifth coalition partner. Kmec described Dzurinda as stubborn, and said he will try to make a deal without Smer. (Comment. From this discussion DCM was left with the impression SDKU is resigned to working with Smer in the next government. End comment.) The worst election outcome, according to Kmec, would be a two-party Smer-HZDS coalition. Kmec thinks Fico is wary of this option as his top priority is to build up his own image as a statesman and leader.

13. (C) Kmec said the private equity group Penta is hedging its bets by making donations to multiple parties. Penta is most interested in having influence over a new health minister and finance minister. (Comment. Penta has been in the news for several months in relation to their investments in health insurers and as providers of emergency medical services. The media frequently speculates that the government's health care reforms were tailored to benefit Penta. In January one opposition leader said Penta had de-facto become the fourth party in the governing coalition. End comment.) Kmec said Penta is sending signals to the parties that, even though Penta itself is not interested in getting access to EU funds, they have the clout to help a new government get more money from the EU.

FURTHER EVIDENCE?

14. (C) SDKU DefMin Martin Fedor and Smer MP Robert Kalinak both attended a showing of a Lockheed-Martin C-130J aircraft on May 23. Kalinak, who currently chairs the Parliamentary Defense Committee and is widely expected to be Smer's choice for DefMin in the next government, was beside Fedor almost throughout the presentation. The two shared private conversations and laughs. When Poloff commented to Fedor's

Chief of Cabinet, Rudolf Michalka, that it was good to see the two men getting on, Michalka replied that all three of them had spent some time together on a trip to Norway, and that Fedor and Kalinak had become quite close. Michalka said the friendship would be useful for avoiding turmoil at MoD after elections. (Comment. Michalka is known to support SDKU in the elections, although he does not belong to the party and does not comment publicly. Almost before he finished stating that Fedor and Kalinak's friendship could be good for the MoD, he seemed to realize he had said something he should not and quickly changed the subject. End comment.) Fedor, Kalinak and Michalka all use the familiar "ty" form when addressing one another.

SDKU: KEEPING ON TRACK TO THE EURO

15. (U) Ivan Stefanec, Plenipotentiary for Euro Adoption and economic specialist spoke about SDKU's main economic objectives at an AmCham breakfast held part of its Election Speaker Series 2006. Stefanec said the party plans to stay on course with its current policies, and to further its reforms. In particular, Stefanec discussed Slovakia's intended entry into the European Monetary Union by January of 2009. He emphasized the importance of following through with the set date, and mentioned some of the steps that have been taken to prepare Slovak citizens for the new currency. These include dual listing of prices in Slovak Crowns and Euro six months before and six months after the adoption, as well as teaching Euro values in schools starting in the coming academic year. In regard to political questions about possible coalitions, Stefanec said that SDKU was prepared to negotiate with any other party, with the exception of the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS). Minister of Justice Lucia Zitnanska spoke at the same breakfast about the party's plans

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for the justice system, which includes greater investment into the system and possible structural changes to improve management and efficiency.

TELLING THEM HOW TO VOTE

16. (U) Slovakia's Roman Catholic Bishops have written a letter to be read during Holy Mass at churches across the country on May 28. The letter reminds parishioners of their "Christian duty" to go to the polls and support movements and parties that support "Christian values." According to the letter such a party would: support healthy marriages and families; protect life from conception to death; be socially-conscious; not indifferent to unemployment and poverty; fight for justice and the security of citizens; and respect religious freedom. Even before the letter has been made public, two opposition parties, HZDS and SNS, have claimed they meet the Bishop's criteria for support. The self-described liberal and secular Alliance of New Citizens (ANO) has protested that the letter is an inappropriate interference of the Church in public life. Most political scientists believe the letter best describes the right-wing KDH, which has refused to comment on the letter before it is read from the pulpit.

MEDIA NOTES

17. (SBU) -- Peter Stano of Slovak Radio told PAO he saw a big difference between a recent MFA press conferences and those of the past. Before MFA was somewhat modest about its accomplishments, and willing to share credit with political allies. Today, they refer frequently to the achievements of "the second Dzurinda government," using that phrase over and over as they list major accomplishments, including NATO and EU entry, various conferences and the Pope's visit.

18. (SBU) The deputy editor of the daily Pravda, Jozef Svolik, told PAO his newspaper would not endorse any parties or candidates the way American papers do. Svolik said it is crucial for the paper to maintain its objectivity, and it

couldn't do that if it was seen as supporting a particular party or candidate. Svolik feared that if Pravda supported one party, the paper might lose readers who favored another party.

¶9. (SBU) Vladimir Muzik, editor of the popular tabloid daily Novy Cas told PAO that his paper would not cover elections at all; "Nobody is interested in politics. Let the other papers cover it. Maybe if there is a scandal we'll write something."

SHOPPING FOR VOTES

¶10. (SBU) Kalinak, who was once voted the sexiest Slovak MP by readers of Novy Cas and is considered to be one of Slovakia's most eligible bachelors, has found a uniquely successful manner of campaigning. According to Katarina Nevedelava, Smer's Assistant International Secretary, Kalinak simply goes shopping for basic groceries. As women invariably recognize "the poor single man" shopping for himself, he is able to show himself to be an everyman and create good word-of-mouth among voters.

VALLEE